

**REMARKS**

Claims 1, 3, and 8 are pending in the application.

**Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103**

Claims 1, 3, and 8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hara (JP 2004-162936) in view of Ohata (USP 4,426,923) and McFadden (US 2004/0216732). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 has been amended to claim:

a suction port for sucking in steam inside the heating chamber;  
an outer circulation passage connecting between the suction port and the sub-cavity;  
an exhaust port provided on the outer circulation passage;  
a damper arranged in the outer circulation passage for opening and closing a passage leading to the exhaust port; . . .  
.....

wherein . . .

the steam inside the heating chamber circulates through a circulation path by flowing into the outer circulation passage via the suction port, then flowing through the sub-cavity, and then flowing back into the heating chamber. (*emphasis added*)

This feature is disclosed at least in Figs. 4 and 6, and described in paragraphs [0031]-[0035], [0044], [0059], and [0087] of the present application.

The foregoing feature of the present invention has the effect of: (1) reduced oxygen concentration inside the heating chamber resulting from steam, while being circulated, driving air out of the heating chamber; and (2) improved heating efficiency resulting from heating being performed while steam is circulated.

Hara discloses, in Fig. 9, a suction port 31 for sucking steam inside a heating chamber 11, and discharging the sucked steam into an upper heated air generating device 23 (corresponds to the “the sub-cavity” of the present invention) through an upper heated air discharging portion 30.

Ohata discloses, in Fig. 2, a suction port 7 for sucking steam inside the storage chamber 1, and discharging into the chamber 1 through a ventilating net 8 by passing the steam through an air passage 6.

The McFadden reference has been relied upon to show that a hybrid oven that combines microwave energy and gas is known in the art.

Applicants submit, however, that even assuming that these references can be combined, which Applicants do not admit, Hara in view of Ohata and McFadden fails to disclose or suggest the “exhaust port provided on the outer circulation passage” and the “damper arranged in the outer circulation passage for opening and closing a passage leading to the exhaust port,” as recited in claim 1.

Claims 3 and 8, dependent on claim 1, are allowable at least for their dependency on claim 1.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

### **Conclusion**

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

In view of the above amendment, Applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

Should there by an outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Maki Hatsumi, Registration No. 40,417 at the telephone number of the undersigned below to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Director is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge any fees required during the pendency of the above-identified application or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448.

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Respectfully submitted,

  
By \_\_\_\_\_ (reg# X0.419)

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